

Hillsborough County, FL (Tampa) Rewarding Youth Achievement Program

Profile of Partners: The School District of Hillsborough County (Tampa, Florida) is the 11th largest in the country with over 165,000 students. The RYA Program exists in the 15 high schools that serve YO! participants. Each school has a RYA contact that functions as a mentor and coach to the RYA youth.

Area Served: Tampa's Enterprise Community (EC) is adjacent to the downtown business district, approximately 11.8 square miles (10% of Tampa), with 49,591 persons living in approximately 20 blocks square (17.7 % of the city's population). Severe unemployment, poverty, crime and extreme population density characterize the EC. More than 47% of the residents live below poverty level (19% citywide) and 98% of the EC public school students are eligible for federal lunch assistance. Only 17% of the residents in the EC own their own form of transportation. In the 15 high school with YO! participants, the graduation rate is 70.57 and the college enrollment rate is 49.42. According to the 1990 census, 38% of the EC residents have less than a 9th grade education and 29% have no diploma.

Profile of Participants/Outcomes: Black/African Americans comprise 35% of RYA participants, Caucasians 39%, and Hispanic/Latinos 19%. 76% of the students participating are 16-17 year olds. More than 63% are female.

Total number of students served: 476

Students returning to school: 476

Students enrolled in post-secondary: N/A

Improved academics, especially math and science: numbers not yet available

Success Story: Tekah Clarke, an RYA student at Chamberlain High, told her story for the RYA newsletter. This is what she said: "I began the RYA program in the summer of 2001 thinking it was just an easy way to get a summer job; little did I know it was more than that. We stood waist deep in stingray-infested waters, went canoeing in the Hillsborough River looking for alligators, and speed boating to a remote little island in the Gulf. I had no idea I even had the courage to go out and do these somewhat dangerous but fun and exciting activities, and to top it all I even got paid for it. The summer was a complete blast. I did things I never imagined while being employed at the Florida Aquarium. In two months I had accomplished and learned so much. But in September our first RYA club meeting came to a complete stop when Mrs. Meyer told us that in order to stay in the club, some of us needed to bring our grade point averages up. As soon as the meeting was over, I felt I needed to get my priorities in order. My mere insignificant GPA was nothing compared to the 2.6 standard I needed to stay in this great program. I thought to myself, 'Tekah, you have to strive to do better; this is your senior year and you can't fall behind.' I decided not to let anything stop me from achieving my goal. After all, I had accomplished so much during the summer, certainly I can improve my grades. From that point on, I strived my hardest and surprisingly I achieved the honor roll not once but twice in a row! This was due to my hard work and dedication to RYA. I definitely didn't want to lose that privilege so I increased my GPA to a 3.5, which may not be much for some students, but for me, a major change. RYA has strengthened me in ways the promoters may not be aware of, such as time management, adult responsibility, and income budgeting. The RYA has allowed me to remain focused...Also, it entitled me to improve my school studies and introduced me to adulthood as well."

Profile of Services for Youth

- **Enriched Summer Experience:**

Numerous student internships were developed, all new ventures. They included Marine Science in which students produced an RYA documentary video and a video for Florida Aquarium to be used by all Marine Science classes in School District during 2002-3 school year; P.C. Support for repairing computers at Hillsborough H.S.; Video Production for producing video to document RYA activities during 2001-2 and 2002-3; Web Design to develop and maintain RYA web site; and internships at the Florida Aquarium, Lowry Park Zoo and the Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI)

Several Career Camps were held, mostly all new ventures, including those with the Florida Aquarium; in Engineering (behind the scenes at Busch Gardens); in Forensics; for Female Networking and Leadership with the Hillsborough Community College; at the Museum of Science and Industry (Digital Entertainment, Computer Hackers, Tiny Terror, Alien Worlds, and Carbon Copy); Video Production (Introduction); and Web Design (Introduction).

- **Math and Science Enrichment:** Activities include one on one tutoring, Career Camps (see above), and summer enrichment activities through the Upward Bound program at the University of South Florida (see below).

- **Year-Round Activities**

Mentoring: An RYA school contact person (the Career Specialist) is assigned to coach/mentor each RYA youth at his/her school site. Each School District's guidance department (Counselors, Career Specialist, and Guidance Resource Specialist) are trained and updated monthly regarding college offerings, entrance exam requirements, scholarships, financial aid, career assessments, and other related matters

High School Success Centers: RYA youth complete a series of service strategies through each high school's Success Center, which function as a link between school and careers by assisting students in preparing for advanced occupational training and education.

Career Assessments: Each high school in the District has a Success Center that is intended to provide a centralized school-based center for connecting activities that facilitate student transition from school to career. The Success Center provides resource services for assessment, remediation, and employability skills training. Assessment components include career planning and counseling, job-related strengths, financial aid opportunities as well as computer software programs such as: Choices, Vocational Implications of Personality, and various employment preparation programs. Success Center activities and learning modules advance and reinforce district graduation standards and support school-to-career transition. All centers include, but are not limited to the following, computer assisted career exploration, resume development, aptitude assessments, labor market trends, career research, and career portfolio development.

Tutoring: RYA has partnered with SERVE (Speaker Bureau for our School District) to provide RYA youth with tutors on an as needed basis. These tutors are paid and work with RYA youth at selected school sites. Strategies include one on one tutoring, group test preparation, and individual or group homework help sessions.

Leadership Development: RYA youth are provided the opportunity to participate in several community-based activities such as: The RYA Youth Leadership Conference held at the University of South Florida, Mayor's Clean Up the Community event, Salvation Army Holiday Bell Ringers' Shriners Hospital events, and Groundhog Job Shadow Day.

- **College Bound Assistance:**

SAT/ACT Prep Classes are conducted for RYA students, who are counseled on test skills and participate in test prep classes offered through school Success Centers utilizing computerized simulation software programs. College Campus Visits/Presentations occur after youth determine which colleges or universities they would like to pursue for continued education. College recruiters are invited out to the school site and tours are scheduled to local colleges and universities. Upward Bound at the University of South Florida provides several services for the RYA students: a campus-based six-week summer residential program and Saturday sessions during the school year focused on enhancing academic skills and preparing the youth for college; job placement for all RYA youth that participate in Upward Bound; and a complete summer academic component with emphasis in the areas of mathematics and science.

Roles of partners:

Linkages to Existing Programs

Upward Bound at the University of South Florida is participating with RYA through the "Marketing Yourself for the Future" Youth Leadership Conference and with internships on the University of South Florida campus during the summer.

Private/Public Sector Commitments: Job Developers are recruiting business partners to hire a minimum of 150 RYA students for 4 weeks during 2002 Summer with RYA funds matching their hourly rate.

Secondary/postsecondary schools commitments: RYA students take field trips to local technical schools and colleges. (see College-bound assistance above)

Key Elements for Success:

- The RYA School Contact Person has been vital to the success of the Tampa program, serving as the bridge between the RYA grant and the youth. Having this person at the school site helps create a bond with the youth, school administration, parents, and the business partners.
- Providing Incentives to the RYA youth is a key element; these youth are excited about participating in a program that rewards them for their achievements.
- Communication about the RYA program has helped to make the program successful. Tampa RYA participates in local Workforce Center Youth Summits and developed a bi-annual newsletter that shares youth and program successes. RYA students are involved in many school and community activities; they eagerly spread the word about the RYA program.

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